

Contributed

BAPTIST HISTORY AS EXHIBITED IN THEIR RECENT WRITINGS.

II.

We have seen how our Baptist friends, when brought face to face with the promise of Christ in Matt. 16:18 and their own finding of the facts of history, are forced to alter their conception of the Church from that which is commonly accepted and taught by them in order to bridge a great period of time when no Baptist Church existed. Now we come to see how great is this period and how very recent is the dating of Baptist church history.

Dr. A. H. Newman writes: "Not until we reach the twelfth century do we encounter types of Christian life that we can with any confidence recognize as Baptist." Then he seeks to trace the beginning of modern anti-pedobaptism through the early "Waldenses (1178 onward)," and says, "Some of them, probably a minority, became Anti-Pedobaptists." He continues, "Peter Chelcicky, the spiritual father of the Bohemian Brethren . . . of the fifteenth century closely approached . . . the Anti-Pedobaptists of the sixteenth century"; but he must conclude, in treating of this "spiritual father," "it is rather disappointing to find him adding, 'if such have children, baptism should be bestowed upon their children in their conscience.'" Further, he writes, "There is no decisive evidence that any party in England rejected infant baptism before the Reformation time." The relation of the above to modern Baptist Church history is summed up as follows: "The Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century had its roots in the evangelical parties of the middle ages." (Amer. Ch. Hist. Ser., Vol. II, pp. 13, 15, 16, 17.)

Over against this effort to trace the beginnings of Baptist Church history back to the "twelfth century," Dr. W. H. Whitsitt writes: "The connection between brethren" (i. e., the Bohemian Brethren) and older reforming parties that existed before the Reformation has been much discussed. The leaders of the movement in Switzerland were aware of no such connection; it was also the custom of the advocates of adult baptism to speak of these leaders as the 'founders of baptism' for more than a century after their decease. Finally, however, in a work published in 1647, the claim was first advanced that the Waldensians were their progenitors. That claim has been often repeated, but has never been established." (Johnson's Univ. Ency., Vol. I, p. 169a). Dr. McGlothlin writes in line with Dr. Whitsitt, controverting the idea advanced by Dr. Newman et al., tracing the beginnings of the Anabaptist Church back to the twelfth century, under the caption, "Anabaptism." "The striking similarity between many of their (the Anabaptists) doctrines and those of some earlier sects has led to an effort to show some historical connection. Ritsell

has sought to trace their doctrines to the Spiritual Franciscans; Ludwig Keller and others have sought to show some connection with the Waldenses, who a little earlier were widely scattered over Central Europe. The similarity in doctrines, spirit and organization is so marked as almost to compel belief in some sort of historical succession; and yet the effort to trace this connection has not so far been successful. (1). The Anabaptists themselves were not conscious of such connection regarding themselves as the spiritual children of a renewed study of the Bible. (2). All their leaders, so far as their lives are known, came out of the Catholic Church. (3). They had little or no communion with older sects after their rise. These considerations render it probable that they, like the sects of the middle ages, are the offspring of a renewed Bible study, and that the similarity is the result of independent Bible study under similar circumstances and controlling ideas." (Ency. Relig. and Eth., Vol. I, p. 406). Here, then, it is quite clear, from Drs. Whitsitt and McGlothlin (even Dr. Newman writing "probably" and, with apology, adding, "it is disappointing, etc."), that Baptist Church history can not antedate the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, of which Dr. Whitsitt writes: "The Anabaptist movement originated at Zurich, Switzerland, between January 18 and 25, 1525." (Johnson's Univ. Ency., Vol. I, p. 168b). With this last statement, Prof. McGlothlin is in agreement and writes of those who broke with Zwingli: "Early in 1524 they reached the conclusion that infant baptism was without warrant in Scripture, was an invention of the Pope, yea, of Satan himself; it was, therefore, invalid, was no baptism, and hence the duty of beginning anew the baptism of believers was felt to rest upon them. This they proceeded to do in December, 1524, or January, 1525." (Ency. Relig. and Eth., Vol. I, p. 407a). So, also, Dr. A. H. Newman. (New Schaff-Herzog, Vol. I, p. 162a). So much for the date of the beginning of the movement of the Anabaptists, of whom Dr. McGlothlin says: "All the leading Reformers (Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Decolampadius, Calvin, Knox and many others) combated their views in one or more publications and disputations; their doctrines are condemned explicitly or by implication in all the leading creeds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." "They were the radical party of the Reformation period." Of their mode of baptism he writes: "The duty of beginning anew the baptism of believers was felt to rest upon them. This they proceeded to do in December, 1524, or January, 1525, when, in a private house, Grebel baptized Blaurock, who in turn took a dipper (almer) and baptized several others in the name of the Trinity." (Ency. Relig. and Eth., Vol. I, pp. 406a, 407a). Of this Dr. Newman says: "In a company composed entirely of laymen, one poured water, in the name of the Trinity, on other members in succession, after they

had expressed a desire to be baptized, and so, as they claimed, they instituted veritable Christian baptism. Like scenes were enacted in other assemblies. It is noteworthy that these first believers' baptisms were by pouring; immersion was introduced later." (New Schaff-Herzog, Vol. I, p. 162a). Dr. McGlothlin now continues: "The mode of baptism was never a matter of discussion. Most of them (Anabaptists) practiced affusion, the form then prevalent over the continent." (Ency. R. & E., Vol. I, p. 410b). Dr. Whitsitt, treating of this, says: "The form of baptism adopted when the movement (of the Anabaptists) was instituted appears to have been by sprinkling, or pouring, and, with comparatively few exceptions, that form was observed wherever the party was established." (J. Univ. Ency., Vol. I, p. 168b). The earliest evidence of the practice of immersion among the Polish Anabaptists is found in the "Racovian Catechism of 1605," which, says Dr. McGlothlin, "provides for immersion as the mode of baptism." (Ency. R. & E., Vol. I, p. 409a). Among the Swiss he writes of the earliest record of immersion as follows: "The founder and leader was Wolfgang Wollmann, who was converted and baptized (immersed naked) in the Rhine at Schaffhausen in February, 1525. (Ency. R. & E., Vol. I, p. 407b). Commenting on the Anabaptist movement as a whole and the mode of baptism, he continues: "The mode of baptism was never a matter of discussion. Most of them practiced affusion, the form then prevalent on the continent; but some of the Swiss and Polish Anabaptists insisted on immersion as the only admissible form, thus anticipating the modern Baptist position." (Ency. R. & E., Vol. I, p. 410b). Dr. Newman, commenting on "the Anti-Pedobaptist movements in the sixteenth century," says: "Immersion was practiced at St. Gall, Augsburg, Strassburg and by the anti-trinitarian Anabaptists of Poland. But the common practice among the Swiss, Austrian, Moravian and Dutch parties was affusion. The importance of immersion as the act of baptism seems to have been appreciated by few." Commenting on the beginning of the Baptist Church in England through John Smyth (and Thomas Helwys), he writes: "It is almost certain that the rite was administered by affusion and not by immersion. His opponents make no reference to the form or the rite, which they would almost certainly have done if it had deviated from current practice; and the entire harmony of Smyth and his party in this matter with the Mennonites, who at the time practiced affusion, would seem decisive in favor of the supposition that they conformed to the common practice." He then traces the beginning of the practice of immersion in England through "Richard Blunt," who was "convinced of baptism, that also it ought to be by dipping the body into the water," to the year "1641." . . . "none having then so practiced in England to professed believers, and, hearing that some in the Netherlands had so practiced, they